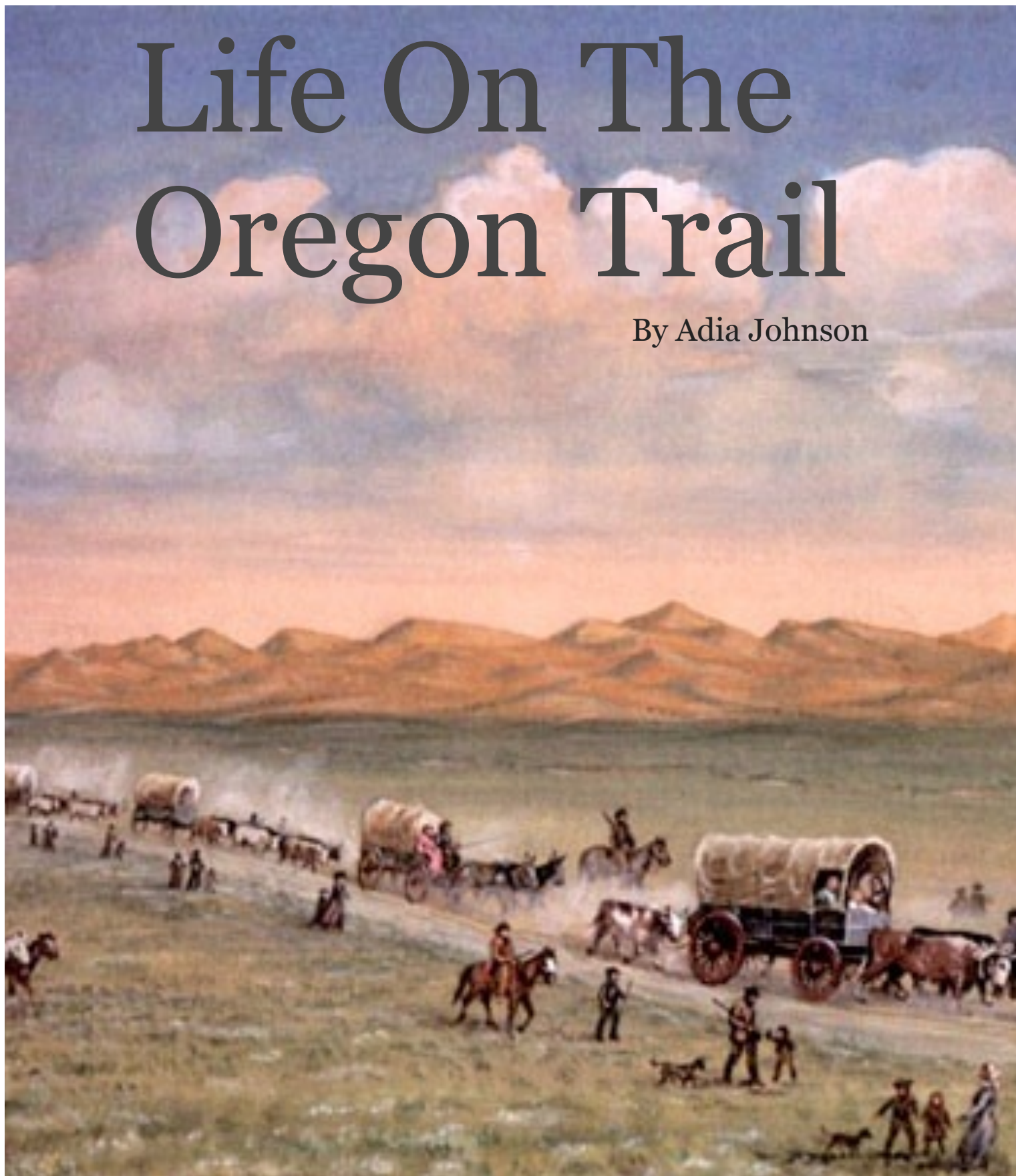


# Life On The Oregon Trail

By Adia Johnson





# Introduction

## WESTERN WAGONS

By Stephen Vincent and Rosemary Carr Benet

“They went with axe and rifle, when the trail was still to **blaze**,  
They went with wife and children, in the prairie-**schooner** days,  
With banjo and with frying pan——Susanna, don’t you cry!  
We’ve broken land and cleared it, but we’re tired of where we are,  
For I’m off to California to get rich out there or die!

They say that wild Nebraska is a better place by far.  
There’s gold in far Wyoming, there’s black earth in Ioway,  
So pack up the kids and blankets, for we’re moving out today!

The cowards never started and the weak died on the road  
And all across the continent the endless campfires glowed.  
We’d taken land and settled——but a traveler passed by——  
And we’re going West tomorrow——Lordy, never ask us why!

We’re going West tomorrow, where the promises can’t fail,  
O’er the hills in **legions**, boys, and crowd the dusty trail!  
We shall starve and freeze and suffer. We shall die, and tame the lands.  
But we’re going West tomorrow, with our fortune in our hands.”

From *1841- 1849* thousands of pioneers traveled West on the Oregon Trail. Through hard times and fun times they walked for miles and miles to get to their one and only destination: Oregon. It all started when John C. Fremont got sent from the government to make a map of the trails.

# THE FOOD THAT THEY BROUGHT



Bacon



Life on the Oregon Trail was not easy. Nobody knew what the weather was going to be like so they could not be prepared. They also had to plan. Like how much food they were going to eat in a day, or how much water they could drink. For us, it's easy. We can just go to the grocery store! Some of the food that they brought with them included: yeast for baking, crackers, cornmeal, bacon, eggs, dried meat, potatoes, rice, beans, and a big barrel of water. Sometimes the pioneers would even bring chocolate for special occasions. If they had a cow, they would bring it and use it for milk and meat. Pioneers also made their own clothes so they brought cloth, needles, thread, pins, scissors, and leather to fix worn out shoes.





# Jumping Off

The Missouri goes West from St. Louis so most of the travelers put their wagons on to steamships for the upstream trip. It was very easy traveling, however it didn't last long: 200 miles from St. Louis is when the Missouri takes a horrible turn to the North. Because of this, the pioneers unloaded their covered wagons at one of the many little towns along the Missouri river. They called this "jumping off."

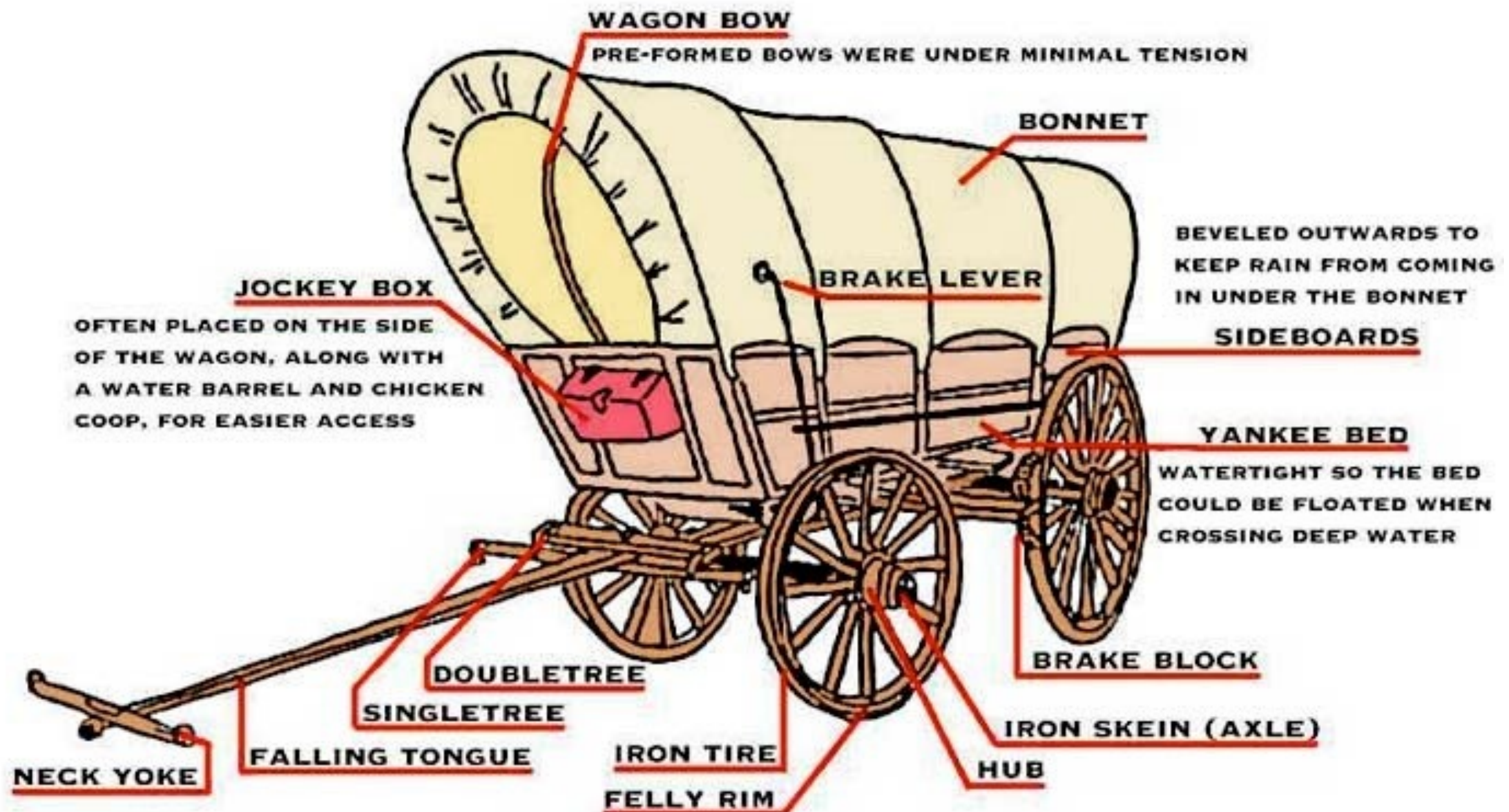


# Covered Wagon

The covered wagon was the star of the Oregon Trail. It carried important things that the pioneers needed to use during their journey. A covered wagon was basically a wagon with a white rounded cloth called canvas. The canvas was rubbed with oil by the pioneers to make it waterproof. The wagon had big wooden hoops that were bent from one side of the wagon to the other, and the pioneers had to stretch the canvas over them. On the canvas, there were drawstrings on the front and back. If you pulled the strings really tight, you could close the ends of the wagon up so that no wind or rain would get in. On the bottom of the wagon there were wheels- but not the kind of wheels you will

find on any toy red wagon. The front wheels were small, and the back wheels were big. This helped the wagon to make sharp turns that were on the trail. Inside of the wagon were hooks that hung on the wooden hoops. On these hooks the pioneers would hang milk cans, jackets, guns, dolls, bonnets, spoons, and anything else for which they had room. The covered wagon was always pulled by oxen, mules, or horses, but many pioneers used oxen because they were stronger. So all together the covered wagon served as a vehicle, house, and a storage closet!





INTERACTIVE 2.1 [Click here to do a fun word search!](#)



See if you can find all the Oregon Trail words.



# Disasters

There were a lot of bad things that could happen on the Oregon Trail. Some of these things might be: robbers, dangerous storms, unfriendly Indians, horrible diseases, and violent animals. At times their livestock would get eaten by coyotes or other animals. Sometimes their livestock would even run away!

(Imagine waking up to find that your car had driven to another state!)

## Polly Coon, 1852

**July 18:** “ . . . reached Bear river valley tonight and camped one half mile from Smiths fork. We were visited by Indians of the darkest **hue** of any I have ever seen.

**July 22:** Camped about 10 o’ clock on Bear river for the purpose of lying over for a few days to rest our cattle who are very much **jaded**. Mr. Fleming one of our Co. lost a very nice ox last night . . .

**July 26:** Left our camp on bear river very much **recruited** both ourselves & teams, & passed on to Thomas’ Fork.

**July 28:** Reached “Soda or Beer Springs” and camped near them. Several of us visited them. They were a great curiosity.”

– Covered Wagon Women: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails, 1852. THE OREGON TRAIL.



Bison would charge at the pioneers if they got too close.



# Diseases

On the Oregon Trail, the pioneers got a lot of diseases. Some of the diseases they got were deadly, but others were small. Pioneers sometimes survived from these diseases, but other times they died from them, and they were buried along the trail. There were all kinds of sicknesses, and here's a small list of them:

- Typhoid fever- Typhoid fever is caused by a bacterium called Salmonella Typhi. This bacterium is contracted by consuming contaminated food or drink. When a person gets Typhoid fever, they start shedding the bacteria in their stool or urine for days or even weeks and make others ill as well.
- Measles- Measles is a highly contagious lung disease that is caused by a virus named rubella that is spread from person to person. It is so contagious that a child who is exposed to it and is not **immune** will almost certainly catch the disease.
- Snake bite is something the pioneers got very often. There were a lot of rattlesnakes where they were traveling, and it was common that somebody got bit.



*In memory of a young pioneer girl who died & was laid to rest here as her family traveled by wagon train to a new home.*



Click play to hear about Marry Scottsworth and her troubles on the Oregon Trail.

Movie

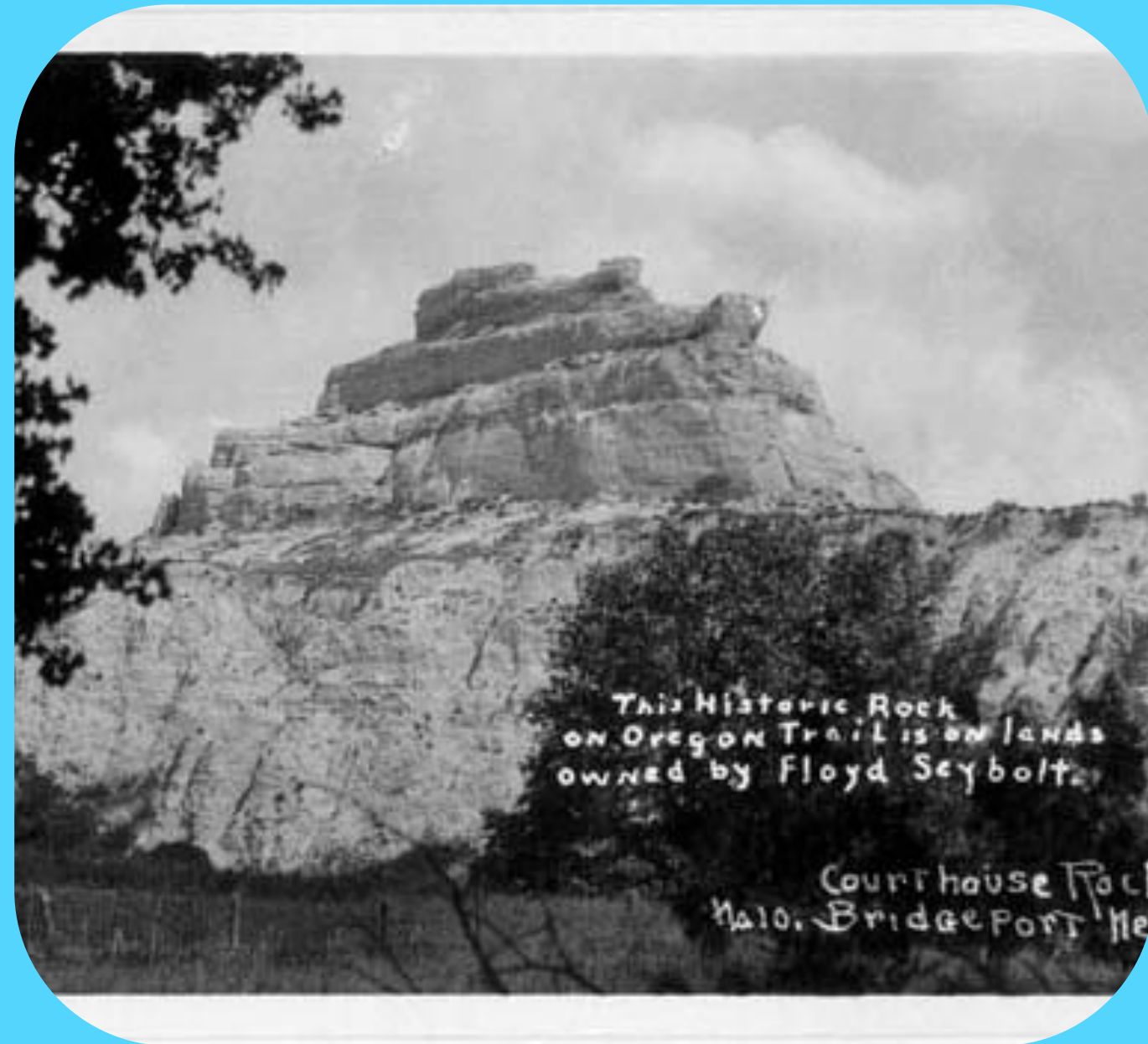


# The Sites They Saw Along the Way

For miles and miles the pioneers walked on the plains seeing nothing but grass. But when they ran into something other than grass, it was a big deal. When they saw this stuff it was a huge accomplishment for them! Some of the common sites that they saw on the way were: Independence, Missouri (where the jumping off happened), Courthouse Rock, Scotts Bluff, Chimney Rock, Fort Kearney (all in Nebraska), Fort Laramie, Devil's Gate, South Pass (all in Wyoming), and The Dalles (in Oregon).

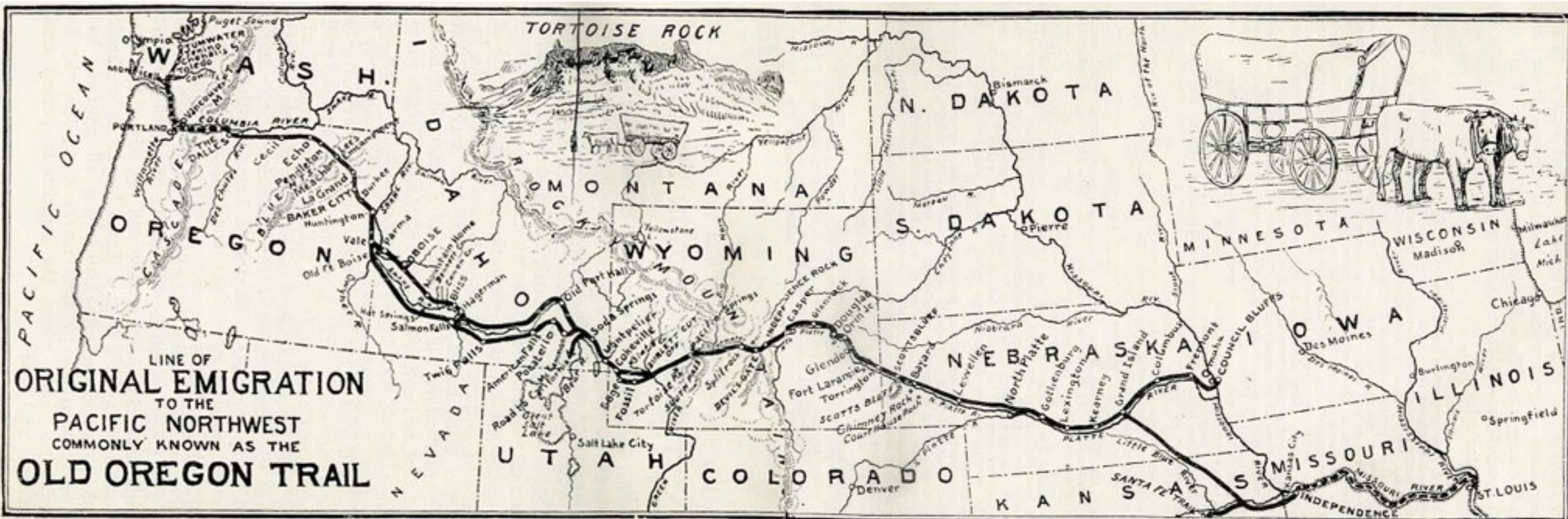
Maria Parsons Belshaw's  
Diary entry

Sites Along the Trail



One pioneer stated that Courthouse Rock “presents a grand & imposing appearance. I should call it a castle as it is mainly round & looks as if it might be fortified. Its size must be immense... It rises abruptly out of the rolling country & stands entirely alone with the exception of a smaller rock... called the Jail. (Western Nebraska)





This is a map of the  
Oregon Trail

REVIEW 4.1 *Test Your Oregon Trail Skills!*

Question 1 of 5

**Which is a real disease?**

---

- ☐ A. Corla Infection
- ☐ B. Grainer Disease
- ☒ C. Typhoid Fever
- ☐ D. Oregon Cough



Check Answer





# Fun With Buffalo Dung!

**You might be thinking, what did the pioneers do each day? How didn't they get bored? Well, buffalo dung was the answer! You might think that frisbees were made in the 1960's but you're wrong--by about a hundred years. Children on the Oregon Trail made frisbee shapes with dried buffalo dung to throw back and forth for fun. (Picture yourself throwing dog poop with your friends in your backyard!)**

**Buffalo dung was also used for other things, not just for being thrown around by children. The entire Great Plains region was covered with buffalo chips, and they were hard to avoid. But the buffalo chips had a more useful purpose. They were burned for fuel. There was not a lot of firewood on the trail, so the only thing they could use was buffalo dung. You might think that it would have stunk, but when burned, it produced an odor-free flame.**



# Chores For The Children

You might think that life for the pioneer children was all play, no work. If you do, you're wrong. They had to wake up early in the morning, when it was still dark, and do chores. A lot of their chores had to be done before they even ate breakfast! Many of the children on the Oregon Trail took care of animals and milked cows. Boys and girls sometimes drove the oxen that pulled the covered wagons. They also helped with cooking or they washed the dishes. The older children babysat the younger children. Another important job for the pioneer children was to fetch the water. Since they often walked ten to fifteen miles a day, they were very thirsty!

**FIGURE 6.1** Abigail Jane Scott's Diary Entry

One girl, Abigail Scott, had a family of nine, and her father gave chores to all of the children. Abigail got the chore to keep a journal of everything they saw on the trail.





# Pioneer Recipes

(The following pioneer recipes and quotes are copied from the book *Recipes From A Sod House Kitchen By Ethel Diedrichsen* )

“Food was an important item for the early settlers. Garden vegetables, wild fruit and game with sourdough biscuits and corn bread formed the basic diet. Variety was limited, and meals were often **monotonous**, especially when times were hard.

A good cook was known for miles on the prairie. Her favorite recipes were in a great demand and were often shared with family and friends. Some of these recipes have been adapted for modern use.”

## Cornbread

Most pioneer cooks used butter or **lard** for fat. At butchering time, when fresh **cracklings** where available, these where often used as a substitute.

1 cup flour	1 cup cornmeal
2 teaspoons sugar	2 eggs
3 teaspoons baking powder	1 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon salt	1/4 cup melted shortening

Sift flour, sugar, baking powder and salt together and stir in cornmeal. Combine eggs, milk and melted shortening with dry ingredients. Bake in 9- inch square pan at 400° for 20 minutes.

## Scrapple

2 quarts water	1/2 teaspoon pepper
2 cups cornmeal	1/4 teaspoon thyme
1 tablespoon salt or sage	1 teaspoon marjoram

**Simmer** pieces of pork in water until the meat drops from the bone. Strain off both, remove bones and chop the meat fine. There should be about two quarts of broth and if necessary add water to make this amount. Blend cornmeal and chopped meat with seasonings and broth. Cook until thick. Pour into bread pans which have been rinsed with cold water. Chill until firm. For serving, cut into slices 1/2 inch thick, dust lightly with flour and fry in a little fat until crisp on both sides. Serve at once.

## Indian Pudding

1/4 cup corn meal	1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups hot milk	1/4 cup molasses
1/4 cup sugar	1 cup cold milk
1/8 teaspoon soda	Whipped topping
1/2 teaspoon salt	Nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ginger	

Moisten cornmeal with water and stir into hot milk. Cook over low heat or in the top of a double boiler, stirring constantly until thick. Remove from heat. Mix sugar, soda, salt, ginger and cinnamon and stir into the corn meal mixture. Add molasses and cold milk. Bake in a one-quart casserole at 270° for two hours. Serve warm with whipped topping and a light sprinkling of freshly **grated** nutmeg. Makes 6 to 8 servings.



## Chokecherry Jelly

Plum **thickets**, chokecherry and elderberry bushes and wild grape vines were plentiful along **ravines** and fence rows. The juice from these fruits was delicious when served on hot cakes or made into jelly.

- 2 cups chokecherry juice
- 2 cups apple juice
- 3 cups sugar

Bring cherry and apple juice to boil. Add sugar and cook until mixture sheets off in two heavy drops from the spoon at one time. Skim, pour quickly and cover with **paraffin**.

## Molasses Taffy

Young people gathered at the school house for Saturday night social affairs. Old- fashioned taffy pulls, spelling bees and box suppers were great fun.

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 2 cups brown sugar   | 1/8 teaspoon salt   |
| 1 cup molasses       | 1 tablespoon butter |
| 1 tablespoon vinegar | 1 teaspoon vanilla  |

## REVIEW 6.1

How smart do you think you are about the Oregon Trail?

Question 1 of 3

What uses did the pioneers have for buffalo dung?

- ☐ A. Building furniture
- ☐ B. Caulking between sod walls
- ☒ C. Frisbees and fuel
- ☐ D. Perfume

Check Answer

Test how smart you  
are on the subject of  
the: Oregon Trail.

Did you pay attention  
to the book?



# Conclusion

Even though we don't see a train of wagons lining the trail anymore, there are still marks of the pioneers' struggles that are visible today. We might think our lives are difficult, like when you have to rush to the grocery store or have to do hard math homework, but take a moment to realize what pain and hardships the pioneers went through and be grateful that it wasn't you.



These are ruts that the covered wagons cut through the rocks on the Oregon Trail.

# Dedication

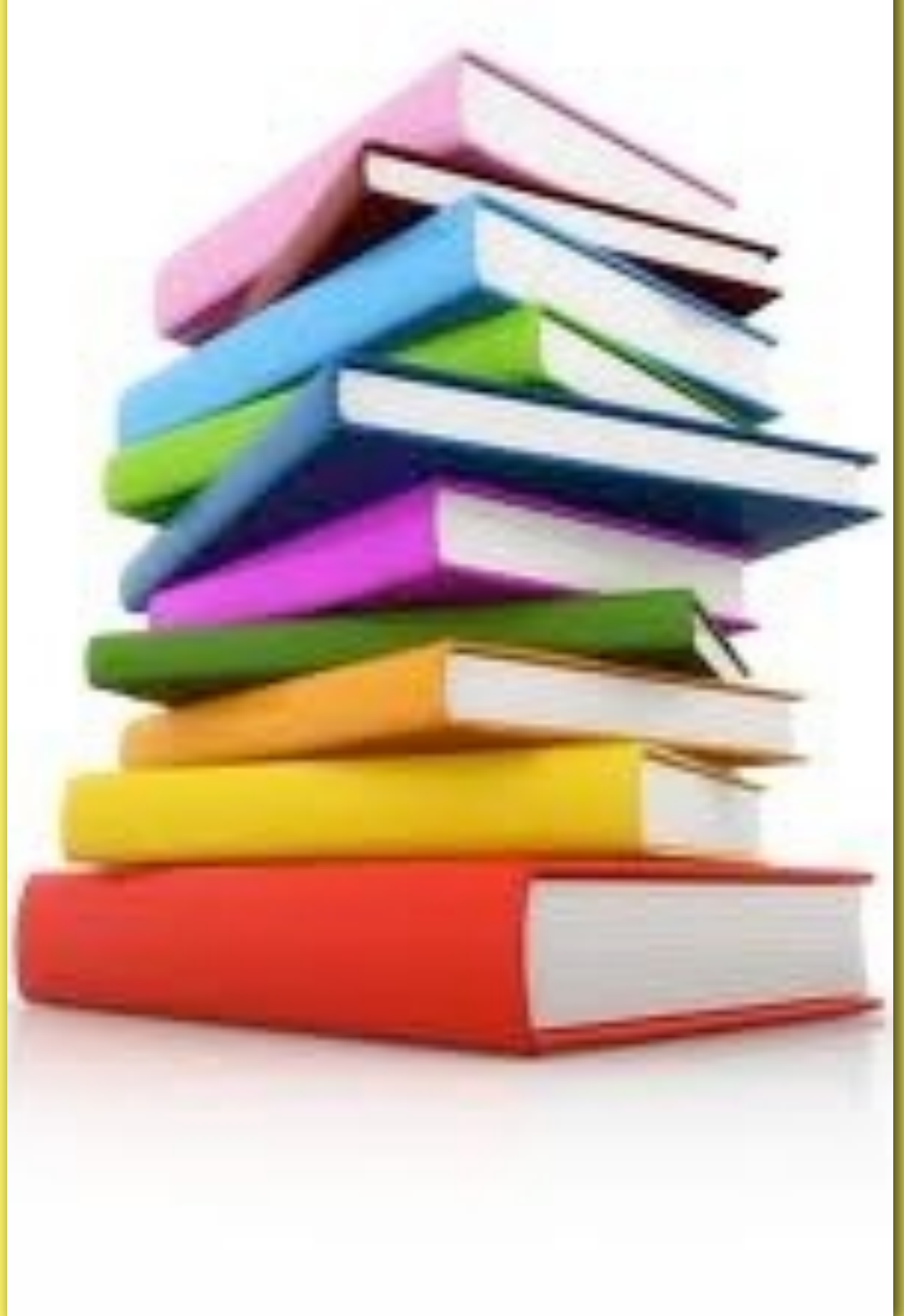


*I dedicate this book to my Mom for her support and love. I also dedicate this book to my 4th grade Nebraska History teacher, Mrs. Hackett for getting me interested in the Oregon Trail topic. Another person I would like to thank is Mrs. Brookhouser, my high ability learner teacher. :)*



# Citations

The citations are all the websites from which I gathered all of the pictures. I am giving credit to all of the people who took the pictures that I used. Turn to the next page to see all of them.



# Citations

Title page - painting of Oregon Trail - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

Gallery - The Food That They Brought bacon picture - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

Gallery - The Food That They Brought yeast picture - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

Gallery - The Food That They Brought rice picture - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

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Gallery - The Food That They Brought eggs picture - [www.creativecommon.com](http://www.creativecommon.com)

Gallery - The Food That They Brought dried meat picture - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

Gallery - The Food That They Brought potato picture - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

Gallery - The Food That They Brought barrels of water - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

Gallery - The Food That They Brought crackers picture - [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)

Covered Wagon - [okielegacy.org](http://okielegacy.org)

Jumping Off photos:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

[kpidaho.webs.com](http://kpidaho.webs.com)

[www.warrensburg.k12.mo.us](http://www.warrensburg.k12.mo.us)

<http://www.america101.us/trail/Jumpingoff.html>

Gallery - The Sites That They Saw - Courthouse Rock - [www.usgwarchives.net](http://www.usgwarchives.net)

Gallery - The Sites That They Saw - Chimney Rock - [www.trekearth.com](http://www.trekearth.com)

Gallery - The Sites That They Saw - Fort Kearney - [www.wyomingtalesandtrails.com](http://www.wyomingtalesandtrails.com)

Gallery - The Sites That They Saw - Fort Laramie - <http://www.wyomingtalesandtrails.com/>

Gallery - The Sites That They Saw - Devils Gate - [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)

Gallery - The Sites That They Saw - South Pass - [kpidaho.webs.com/escapetoglennsferry.htm](http://kpidaho.webs.com/escapetoglennsferry.htm)

Page 7 - Gallery pictures - [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu), [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org), [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com)



# Major Websites

These are the major websites I used to get information for my book. Turn the page to see them.



# Major Websites (and books)

The book, Recipes From A Sod House Kitchen

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/upboverbib:@field\(SUBJ+@od1\(Oregon+National+Historic+Trail\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/upboverbib:@field(SUBJ+@od1(Oregon+National+Historic+Trail)))

<http://www.america101.us/trail/Allabout.html>

<http://www.oregontrailcenter.org/HistoricalTrails/PioneersTalk.htm>

# Blaze [bleyz]

*noun*

a bright, hot gleam or glow: the blaze of day.

definition from:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/blaze?s=t>

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

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Chapter 1 - Life On The Oregon Trail



# Cornmeal

noun \ˈkɔrn-,mēl\

: a coarse flour made from crushed corn

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cornmeal>

---

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Chapter 1 - The Food That They Brought

# Cracklings    noun

: the crisp skin of a roasted animal (such as a pig) eaten as food

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crackling>

---

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# Grated verb \ˈgrāt\

: to reduce to small particles by rubbing on something rough<grate cheese>

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grate>

---

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Chapter 6 - Pioneer Recipes



# Hue [hyoo or, often, yoo]

a gradation or variety of a color; tint: pale hues.

definition from:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hue?s=t>

---

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**Chapter 3 - Disasters**

Immune adjective \i-'myün\

: not capable of being affected by a disease

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/immune>

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**Chapter 3 - Disasters**

# Jaded [jey-did]

*adjective*

worn out or wearied, as by overwork or overuse.

definition from:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/jaded?s=t>

---

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Lard    transitive verb \ˈlărd\

: to put pieces of fat onto or into (something) before cooking

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lard?show=0&t=1389107358>

---

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# *Legions*

*noun*

*an army*

*definition from:*

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Legions>

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Chapter 1 - Life On The Oregon Trail

Monotonous adjective \mə-'nä-tə-nəs, -'nät-nəs\

—used to describe something that is boring because it is always the same

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/monotonous?show=0&t=1389106150>

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**Chapter 6 - Pioneer Recipes**

Paraffin noun \ˈper-ə-fən, ˈpa-rə-\

: a soft, waxy substance that is usually made from petroleum or coal and is used in candles and other products

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paraffin>

---

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# Prepared

Adjective

properly expectant, organized, equipped, or ready

definition from:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/prepared?s=t>

---

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Ravines noun \rə-ˈvēn\

: a small, deep, narrow valley

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ravine?show=0&t=1389296992>

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# Recruited verb \ri-'krüt\

: to persuade (someone) to join you in some activity or to help you

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recruited?show=0&t=1389105343>

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# Schooner [skoo-ner]

*noun*

any of various types of sailing vessel

definition from:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/schooner?s=t>

---

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Chapter 1 - Life On The Oregon Trail



# Simmer   verb \ 'si-mər \

: to cook (something) so that it is almost boiling for a certain period of time

definition from:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/simmer>

---

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# Thickets noun

: something resembling a thicket in being crowded together or impenetrable <a thicket of fans>

definition from:

<http://www.wordcentral.com/cgi-bin/student?book=Student&va=thicket>

---

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